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AUTHOR Schroeder, Timothy D.
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ABSTRACT

Several studies in the recreation, parks, and leisure literature have indicated that discrimination because of gender has affected the placement and advancement of women. Examination of the effect of gender on the selection of candidates for entry level positions in the recreation, parks, and leisure fields involved the evaluation of resumes of six fictitious candidates by park and recreation administrators. Three entry level positions were examined, community center director, sports and athletics coordinator, and arts and crafts supervisor. The gender of one of the candidates for each position was changed by modifying the names between two experimental groups of administrators. Results revealed no significant differences between gender on rating of candidates for the positions, supporting the conclusion that gender discrimination is not an overall significant factor in entry level selection. (CB)

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THE EFFECT OF GENDER ON ENTRY LEVEL LEISURE EMPLOYEE SELECTION

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by

Timothy D. Schroeder

Assistant Professor
Recreation and Leisure Services Program
Dept. of Health, Physical Education and Recreation
Northern Arizona University
NAU Box 6012
Flagstaff, AZ 86011
(602)523-4122

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ABSTRACT

Several studies in the recreation, parks and leisure literature have indicated that discrimination because of gender has affected the placement and advancement of women. This study directly examines the effected of gender on the selection of candidates for entry level positions. Six ficticious candidates' resumes for each of three jobs were evaluated by parks and recreation administrators. The gender of one of the candidates for each position was changed by modifying the names between two experimental groups of administrators. No statistically significant differences in the ratings were found between male and female candidates for any of the three positions. It was concluded that the overall effect of gender discrimination was not a significant factor in entry level selection.

KEYWORDS: Gender, Sex Discrimination, Employee Selection

ENTRY LEVEL EMPLOYEE SELECTION
IN PUBLIC LEISURE SERVICES: THE EFFECT OF GENDER

Gender differences in public parks and recreation employment has been indirectly demonstrated in several studies. A study by Kerr (1975) found that while women comprised 33.5 percent of the full-time professional employees of the 70 parks and recreation agencies studied, only 15.0 percent of the administrators were women. About 48.0 percent of full-time employees with less than supervisory responsibility were women. Kerr also found that average salaries for women were significantly lower than for men at all levels, even though differences in education and experience were small.

Another nationwide study of public parks and recreation agencies estimated that there were about 55,000 professional recreation and parks jobs in the U.S., of which about 24 percent were women. Women were found to be only 5 percent of the chief administrators, 15 percent of the activity specialists and 45 percent of the program leaders. Thus it appeared that women were not as upwardly mobile as men within the profession. (National Recreation and Park Association, 1977).

Dunn (1977) examined a variety of data related to employment in the parks and recreation field. She pointed out a decline in employment of women in the Post-World War II era and low representation of women in leadership positions.

There should be little surprise that gender seems to affect personnel decisions as differential treatment of the sexes has been well documented in the psychological literature. For instance Zikmund et al.

(1978) found that sex of an applicant influenced the number of positive responses received from personnel directors seeking accounting students. Dipboye et al. (1977) found that sex and attractiveness influenced evaluations of candidates' qualifications for hypothetical positions. Rose and Andiappan (1978) found that the sex of applicants affected the perceived suitability for supervisory positions, with males being preferred to supervise males and females being preferred to supervise females. These studies and a multitude of others have demonstrated that gender stereotypes and preferences have affected selection and placement of employees.

Indirect evidence supports the conclusion that gender discrimination exists in parks and recreation employment. Evidence from the business world and psychological experiments demonstrate directly that gender affects placement decisions. The purpose of this study was to assess the influence of gender on selection of candidates for entry level positions in public leisure service agencies. Three entry level positions were examined, one gender neutral position (community center director) and two which might be considered to be sex stereotyped, sports and athletics coordinator and arts and crafts supervisor.

METHODOLOGY

Job descriptions were developed for three fictitious positions with municipal parks and recreation departments: Community Center Director, Sports and Athletics Coordinator, and Arts and Crafts Supervisor. The duties and qualifications for each position were designed as entry level positions, with a bachelors degree and some experience being desired.

Six fictitious resumes were developed for each position with all

meeting the general minimum qualifications for its particular position. The resumes were designed so that 2 resumes for each position were, in the investigators judgement, more highly qualified than the other four.

The subjects were municipal parks and recreation directors of cities between 10,000 and 50,000 population from the Great Lakes states of Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, and Ohio. The subjects were randomly divided into two groups by state, so that each state contained approximately equal numbers from each state. There were 96 subjects in each group.

The subjects were mailed packets containing the 3 job descriptions and the resumes of 6 fictitious candidates along with instructions asking them to read each position description and then rate the qualifications of the candidates on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being highest). They were instructed to use the standards they would use in filling a similar position in their own agency.

The effect of gender on the ratings was measured by changing the gender of one candidate for each position. The gender of one of the candidates which the investigator expected to be rated high was differentiated between groups by designation fo the chosen candidate's name, such as Michael and Michelle or Paul and Paula.

Group A received a male candidate for Center Director and Arts and Crafts Director and a female candidate for Sports and Athletics Coordinator. Group B received the reverse. Thirty-six responses were received from Group A and 42 from Group B for an overall response rate of 40.6 percent.

ANALYSIS

The ratings for each experimental candidate were recorded along with the gender of that candidate. The investigator also rank ordered the six candidates for each position, based upon the ratings of each respondent.

The ratings of each candidate were compared between the two gender groups using a t-test. The rankings between the gender groups of each candidate were compared using chi-square.

RESULTS

The experimental candidate for Center Director (Michael/Michelle Wright) received a mean rating of 6.64 as a male and 6.88 as a female. The t-test revealed this to be a statistically nonsignificant difference.

The experimental candidate for Arts and Crafts Supervisor (Paul/Paula Campbell) received mean ratings of 6.92 as a male and 7.02 as a female. Again the t-test revealed a nonsignificant difference.

The experimental candidate for Sports and Athletics Coordinator (Denise/Dennis Skinner) received mean ratings of 6.05 as a male and 6.40 as a female. The t-test showed this to be a nonsignificant difference.

The rankings of the candidates for the three positions were compared between genders using the chi-square test. Again the tests revealed no significant difference between the experimental groups.

DISCUSSION

The results show no significant differences between genders on ratings of candidates for three entry level positions. This supports the conclusion that gender discrimination is not an overall significant factor at the entry level, only that its overall effect is not significant.

A factor which should be considered in interpreting the results is the composition of the subjects. Parks and recreation directors from the Great Lakes region may not be representative of the U.S. in regard to gender discrimination. Nor may those who volunteer to participate in a study be representative.

Part of the lack of significant results may be due to the high variation in the ratings given the candidates. The standard deviations were all in excess of 1.60, fairly high on a 10 point scale. Better development of the resumes might have resulted in more consistent ratings, thus lowering the variance.

A question that remains unanswered, and was not addressed by this study, is the impact of gender discrimination at higher levels. The data available from previous studies indiretly indicates that discrimination exists. The impact of gender discrimination on upward mobility needs to be investigated.

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TABLE 1

T-Test Ratings of Candidates

Position	Gender	Mean	T-Value	Sig.
Center Director	Male	6.64	1.14	.697
	Female	6.88		
Sports & Athletics	Male	6.05	1.28	.456
	Female	6.40		
Arts & Crafts	Male	6.92	1.06	.860
	Female	7.02		

TABLE 2

Chi-Square Results

Position	Chi-Square	Df	Significance
Center Director	4.72	6	.580
Sports & Athletics	3.27	6	.774
Arts & Crafts	7.18	5	.208